

WORKERS WORLD

Workers and oppressed peoples of the world unite!

June 18, 2009

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50¢

Keep auto plants open!

Use bailout funds to save workers' jobs

By Fred Goldstein

More than a million and a half workers in the United States have lost their jobs since last December. Some 345,000 lost their jobs in May. Unemployment is at 9.4 percent and headed up to more than 10 percent.

Well over 25 million workers are out of work or underemployed. Long-term unemployment is at a record.

Nevertheless, Washington has given General Motors and Chrysler \$17 billion as a reward for shutting down 22 plants, tearing up union contracts and closing 3,000 dealerships. And the government has promised billions more to the auto barons.

These cruel measures will sharply aggravate the unemployment crisis across the country and bring further hardship to those still working.

They must be stopped.

Companies must not be paid by the government to shut down factories or impose no-strike pledges, wage freezes, compulsory arbitration, loss of break time, reduced overtime and supplementary unemployment benefits pay, two-tier systems that lower wages, reduced retiree benefits, and so on.

These billions in government money should be used instead to keep workers on the job and provide them a decent living.

Well over 100,000 autoworkers, mechanics, salespeople and office personnel who work directly for GM, Chrysler and the auto dealers will lose their jobs.

The ripple effect will cost 10 times that many jobs outside the auto industry. Workers who produce auto parts, steel and other metals, rubber, glass, paint, microchips and computers, machine tools and robots will lose their jobs, along with drivers who haul the cars and service workers in the communities that surround the plants and dealerships.

Communities that have given the auto companies tax breaks and built infrastructure for them will lose important tax revenue. They will be forced to cut their budgets, make further layoffs and reduce services.

The auto bosses are aiming a hammer blow at workers and communities all across the country. And Washington is paying them to do it!

Instead of allowing the government to hand \$175 billion to insurance giant AIG to pay off its gambling debts and trillions to the banks to clean up their balance sheets, unions and communities should demand that this money be used to keep the plants open, reopen those already closed down, and hire back those laid off.

Instead of a government TARP fund for bankers, we need a JOBS fund for workers.

It's done in Europe

This is not an outrageous idea. In Europe, where the unions have been stronger and the bosses weaker than in the United States, the labor movement has been able to push governments to slow down layoffs and plant closings and subsidize workers.

In Germany, France, Italy, Belgium and other countries, the governments have been forced to lend companies money for the specific purpose of keeping plants open and saving jobs, not shutting them down. In the last five years, despite declines in auto sales worldwide, European auto workers have been able to maintain their job level at about 2.3 million. Over the same period in the U.S., auto jobs have declined from 1.1 million to 780,000. (New York Times, May 25)

U.S. autoworkers and all the unions and communities affected by this latest round of attacks should demand that a good piece of the trillion dollars going to the auto companies and the banks be turned over to the unions, in alliance with the communities, so that the workers can keep the operation going.

This money should not go to the present owners but to the rightful owners, the workers, who created all the wealth of the companies. Owners and high-paid officials are not needed to run the companies. That is a complete myth. Their specialty is making a profit off the backs of the workers. The present economic crisis dictates that profits must be subordinated to the workers' interests.

The unions can put together their own management teams. They can come from the ranks of the workers and from the thousands of managers, accountants and other white-collar workers thrown out of their jobs. They can be rehired by the unions with government money and given the task of management under the control of the workers and in collaboration with repre-

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The time is **NOW**

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The Bail Out the People Movement's call for an emergency protest against a June 7 foreclosure auction demanded that "the City of New York, the Grand Hyatt and the Real Estate Disposition Corporation (REDC) cancel the auction, set up to allow financial predators to profit from throwing people out on the street."

About 100 activists held a rally and then set up a picket line outside the auction hotel next to the busy Grand Central Station on this Sunday morning.

The protesters demanded a moratorium on all foreclosures and evictions, which affect millions of people in the U.S., especially those who have lost their jobs.

Banks and mortgage firms are foreclosing homes at the

rate of 15,000 a day with the help of firms like REDC. The auctions are in direct violation of recent federal policies established to alleviate the housing crisis and provide homeowners with the time and opportunity to renegotiate the onerous loans.

The homes of poor and working people that were on the June 7 auction block have been taken over by the big banks that have collected \$12 trillion in government handouts. Meanwhile, there are a growing number of lawsuits being filed by the NAACP and others on behalf of Black homeowners, disproportionately victimized by the racist-driven, high-interest, sub-prime home loans on the part of Wells Fargo bank.

—Report and photo by Lal Roohk

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Dr. Tiller’s death: A major loss for women

By Julie Fry

On June 6, hundreds of mourners gathered in Wichita, Kan., to attend the funeral of Dr. George R. Tiller, the women’s health care provider who was brutally murdered May 31 by an anti-abortion assassin. Family members and friends, doctors and supporters filled the church, while hundreds of others watched the funeral via closed-circuit television in nearby rooms.

Activists wearing shirts bearing the National Organization for Women emblem lined the sidewalk in front of the church, assembling what they called a “Martyr Guard” to protect Dr. Tiller’s family from being confronted by any anti-abortion fanatics.

Inside the church, friends and colleagues remarked on the generous and caring nature of Dr. Tiller, who spent almost his entire career defending women’s right to have abortions and high-quality reproductive health care. His motto, displayed prominently in his clinic, was “Trust Women.”

When asked why he continued to provide midpregnancy abortions after decades of the most brutal attacks by the right wing, Dr. Tiller replied, “Where else can women go?” Indeed, the loss of Dr. Tiller means there are less than a half-dozen doctors left in the U.S. who specialize in the vital, life-saving services he provided. Dr. Tiller’s clinic is the only remaining reproductive health care clinic in Wichita.

Dr. Tiller, who started out as a dermatologist, began providing abortions after taking over his father’s medical practice after his death. After reading his medical files, Dr. Tiller discovered that his father had been providing illegal abortions for women. Reading these women’s stories, he felt a duty to continue to provide this vital service to women.

His decision to provide midpregnancy abortions made him a hero to women facing gut-wrenching, awful circumstances late in their pregnancies. But it also made him a primary target of right-wing, anti-choice terrorists. He endured violent attacks from these groups for decades on an almost daily basis. In 1986, his clinic was bombed. Dr. Tiller placed a sign on the rubble that read, “Hell no, we won’t go.” Then he rebuilt the facility as a military-

Take back WBAI!

For decades, New Yorkers have relied on WBAI 99.5 FM, in the Pacifica Radio Network, for radio broadcasting that provides real news and perspectives not filtered by corporate media. Now, the station is under attack.

Exploiting a financial crisis at the station, the Pacifica Corp., along with the WBAI Local Station Board majority, are attempting to impose their own brand of programming by removing what some label “racial divisiveness and balkanization”—meaning community self-determination, particularly programs by and for the Black community.

On May 6, WBAI’s progressive Black general manager, Tony Riddle, was fired. Two days later, another progressive Black manager, program director Bernard White, was “suspended” and then fired outright on May 18.

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style fortress and continued to carry on his work.

Dr. Tiller was shot in both arms in 1993. He wore a bullet-proof vest almost everywhere he went and travelled in an armored car. Anti-choice terrorists targeted his clinic and his home; even his family was constantly threatened and harassed. Operation Rescue, the group that is the primary organizer of most of the clinic violence and harassment directed against Dr. Tiller, moved its headquarters from California to Wichita specifically to target him. It put up a website called “Tiller Watch” and made him the personal target of hundreds of demonstrations and daily threats and harassment.

Collusion between the U.S. gov’t, right-wing

In addition to the constant barrage of attacks from groups like Operation Rescue, Dr. Tiller was the target of state officials who colluded with anti-choice forces to try to shut down his clinic. He was the target of a baseless grand jury investigation. This past March, he was tried and acquitted on all counts in a sham political trial orchestrated by the state of Kansas.

But the state’s relationship to these right-wing terrorist groups has become even clearer since Dr. Tiller’s death. Both the week before and the day before Dr. Tiller’s murder, his killer was caught vandalizing abortion clinics. A witness called the police and the FBI both times. The witness had the killer’s first name, his license plate number, and his image taken from video surveillance. When the witness contacted FBI agent Mark Colburn to report the incident, Colburn replied, “The Johnson County prosecutor won’t do anything until the grand jury convenes.” (Huffington Post, June 7) No arrest was made, or even attempted, and Dr. Tiller was murdered the next day.

The FBI’s lackadaisical approach to the arrest of anti-abortion terrorists, who are part of a movement with a decades-long track record of bombings and assassinations in this country, stands in stark contrast to their much publicized role in the so-called “war on terror.” In May the FBI arrested four Black men in Newburgh, N.Y., after what was described as a year-long undercover anti-terrorism investigation. The men, including a mentally ill Haitian immigrant, were arrested for “conspiring” to use “weapons of mass destruction,” such as a stinger missile, even though there is no evidence they ever came close to obtaining actual weapons.

But the long, high-profile investigation of these four Black men, who had no previous involvement with terrorism or terrorist organizations before meeting an undercover FBI agent begs the question for many women: Why isn’t the state protecting women from anti-abortion terrorists who frequently and publicly declare their intention to do harm to women, clinics and doctors?

Dr. Tiller’s killer has declared from his jail cell that more violence is already being planned against clinics and doctors. This type of home-grown terror has been allowed to reign freely for years, with barely a response from the government. Why haven’t there been serious, probing undercover investigations that could actually prevent these terrorist acts before they happen? The state’s protection of these terrorist organizations is, for many women, the true indicator of where the government really stands in the battle to protect women’s rights.

Fry is a National Women’s Fightback Network and Fight Imperialism, Stand Together (FIST) organizer.

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BOSTON

Community labor coalition sets back resegregation plan

By Frank Neisser
Boston

On June 3, a strong demonstration of some 300 parents, teachers, students, school bus drivers and community activists stormed a meeting of the Boston School Committee, forcing the committee to backpedal on its City-Hall-authored “5 zone” plan for school resegregation. The demonstration was organized by the Coalition for Equal Quality Education, whose organizing has caused the School Committee to put off a planned vote three times now.

The June 3 protest was the culmination of month-long actions to combat the mayor’s proposal to return to segregated “neighborhood” schools. These actions included a May 14 Community Summit of over 250 at Roxbury Community College, and a May 18 march from the Rafael Hernandez School and the Timilty School through the streets to a Boston Public

Schools forum on the plan at the Lewis School, in the heart of Boston’s Black and Latina/o communities most impacted by the plan.

This spirited march was led by students, including kindergarten students marching and dancing. The marchers then took over the hearing.

Both schools would lose their citywide status under the “5 zone” plan. Over half of the students attending the schools now would no longer have access to them. Three of the five proposed zones, including the one with the largest Latina/o immigrant population, would have no access to any two-way bilingual program like that offered at the Hernandez School.

At the June 3 demonstration at the School Committee Headquarters, rank-and-file members of the School Bus Drivers Union, Steelworkers Local 8751, poured off buses from each of the yards throughout Boston to help form a militant picket line and rally outside. School



Protesters say no to “5 zone” plan June 3.
WWW PHOTO: LIZ GREEN

Committee and city officials had to make their way through what the Boston Globe characterized as literal “public uproar,” given voice by a family of three generations of African-American women leading the crowd in chants of: “Say NO, say NO! Racism has got to go!”

The protesters carried placards with pictures of Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Lu-

ther King Jr. together and Puerto Rican poet/activist Rafael Hernandez, proclaiming, “Say No to Racism in Education,” “Demand Equal Quality Education,” “We Bailed Out Wall St., Don’t Let Court St. Cut Funding for School St.,” and “5-Zone Plan = Segregation.”

As the officials’ meeting began, the demonstrators marched inside past security, stopping the proceedings in their tracks for 15 minutes. The crowd then completely surrounded the committee and filled every space of standing room. They spilled into the hall outside, chanting and holding their signs high for all to see. During the public comment section of the meeting, speaker after speaker blasted the “5 zone” plan.

The loudest cheers came at the comments of Maureen Skehan of the Women’s Fightback Network, a parent of a student at the Hernandez School and a member of the CEQE. Skehan said: “Mayor Menino’s five-zone, neighborhood school plan is a huge leap backward to further segregated, unequal schools, and it should be withdrawn from consideration immediately. Right now, 56 percent of the students and parents at the Hernandez are trying to figure out what we will do when the mayor and his constables stand in our school’s door next year and say, ‘No, you can’t go here anymore!’ More than 10,000 children and their families face the same massive disruption. We demand the school

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Hundreds protest anti-lesbian attack by cops

Over 300 members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans community, along with their supporters, rallied in front of the 77th precinct in Brooklyn, N.Y., June 6 to demand justice for two lesbians of color who were brutally beaten and arrested by the police on May 17. The 77th Precinct, particularly notorious for police brutality, is also responsible for the June 2007 beatings and arrests of human right attorneys Michael Tarif Warren and Evelyn Warren, who are African American.

The police assault took place outside a local nightclub, where Jeannette “JG” Grey, 31, and Tiffany Jimenez, 19, were attending a party for lesbians. The cops, all men, hurled the vilest of anti-LGBT and sexist slurs as they beat the two women. JG, a Black lesbian, told protesters how several cops beat her with nightsticks as she lay on the pavement.

Jimenez, a Latina who has cops in her family, read the following statement at the rally: “All of a sudden the cops are pushing me. Next I was on the floor. I had on no shoes and they threw me on my back. I’m screaming and crying. I was in a dress and they rolled me over and my butt was exposed. One cop put his knee on my leg and back, and he was at least 200 pounds, maybe more, and I’m small.” Both women live in Brooklyn.

Speakers at the rally, organized by the Safe Outside the System Collective, an affiliate of the Audre Lorde Project, and Globe, the Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender project of Make the Road New York—included New York City Councilperson Leticia James, community activist Kevin Powell, and longtime anti-police brutality activist and attorney for the two women Andrea Ritchie.

A spirited march followed the rally, with protesters chanting, “Stop homophobia! Jail the guilty cops!” The protest closed with a militant poem by Yvonne Fly Onakeme Etaghene, which included the lines, “I want to be safe to hold my woman’s hand in the streets at midnight/I want to not have to wait until June to celebrate my pride.”

Community groups called for a list of de-



mands, including firing the cops involved in the beatings and dropping all charges against the women. The women are sched-

uled to be in court later in June. To find out ways to support these women see www.alp.org or www.maketheroad.org.

—Report and photo by Imani Henry

DETROIT

Police shootings provoke community outrage

By Abayomi Azikiwe
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

Over 100 people gathered on Detroit’s west side at Euclid and Holmur on May 31 to protest the shootings of three African-American youths earlier in the month. Community residents and relatives of the victims say the shootings were unprovoked.

Witnesses say Detroit police officers walked onto a porch on Montgomery Street on May 20 and then shot three people. One of the victims, Antonio Jennings, 24, was gravely wounded.

Jennings’ mother, Titania Shipp, said that her son was shot five times. His wounds were so severe that he was revived twice at the hospital. Jennings is in police custody and is being charged with attempted murder, felonious assault and carrying a concealed weapon.

“I have no information on the circumstances surrounding the shooting of my son. I was not allowed to see him at the hospital. Due to the intervention of his lawyer, I was able to speak to him once

over the telephone,” Shipp said.

Jennings’ attorney, Gordana Misovski, also attended the rally. “In my years as a practicing attorney I have not seen anything of this magnitude,” Misovski stated.

Christopher Norman, 19, who was slightly wounded in the shooting incident, was arrested on May 30 for allegedly standing on a corner. His mother, Teenica Banks, chaired the rally on May 31. She said the shooting had taken place at her mother’s home.

Members of the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality helped organize the rally and issued a list of four demands, including an apology from Detroit Mayor David Bing and Police Chief James Baren on the officers’ conduct, and the payment of restitution and repair of damage police inflicted on the home at which the shooting took place.

Two other demands call for an “investigation of the incident in question by the Detroit City Council, the Detroit Board of Police Commissioners and the U.S. Department of Justice, along with the charg-

ing of the officers by the Wayne County Prosecutor’s Office.”

The wounding of these youths follows a pattern of increased police misconduct and brutality in Detroit. On April 10, Robert Mitchell, age 16 of Detroit, was chased back into the city and tased by the Warren Police. Mitchell later died from his injuries.

The deceased’s mother, Cora Mitchell, attended the rally and expressed her concern for the three youths and their families. On May 21, 300 people demonstrated in the northeast Detroit neighborhood and in Warren against the failure of the Wayne County Prosecutor to file criminal charges against the police officers involved in Mitchell’s death.

During the May 31 rally, police pulled up to a group of African-American youths nearby. The cops, who were dressed in riot gear and wore masks, jumped out of their vehicles and ordered the youths against a fence. Several rally participants walked over and inquired whether the officers had warrants. The police then backed off and left the scene. □

Harvard University

The banks, layoffs & growing fightback

By Phebe Eckfeldt and Ed Childs
Cambridge, Mass.

On June 4, during Commencement Day 2009 at Harvard University—the richest university in the world—graduating students held up signs spelling “N-O L-A-Y-O-F-F-S” inside, while workers on the outside held up the same signs.

For months leading up to commencement, a loose coalition of Harvard students and unions has been protesting layoffs at the university. Comprised of members of the No Layoffs Campaign—started by members of the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees Local 3650; UNITE/HERE; Service Employees union Local 615; Student Labor Action Movement; and other student activists—this grouping has held rallies, marches and forums demanding no layoffs and no cuts in services.

The campaign has been working hard to expose the fact that Harvard is being run as a financial institution, not a non-profit educational institution. Dictating the layoffs is the Harvard Corporation, an entity dating from 1650 that now includes representatives from both Citigroup and Goldman Sachs.

Edward C. Forst, global head of the Investment Management Division of Goldman Sachs, was appointed in June 2008 to be Harvard’s first executive vice president. He became senior advisor to the president of Harvard, Drew Faust, and a member of the Harvard Management Corporation (HMC)—the group which manages the school’s endowment fund. That fund hit a high of \$36.9 billion last year—the world’s largest development fund, which is as big as the combined gross domestic products of several countries. Forst will step down in August but will remain as an advisor and a member on several Harvard finance committees.

Another big player in the Corporation is Robert E. Rubin, former U.S. Secretary of the Treasury and a former leader at Citigroup and Goldman Sachs before that. These are the same banks and executives who, through wild, fraudulent speculation, caused millions of poor and working people to lose their homes or be evicted. Rubin was purportedly an architect of this strategy at Citigroup. Both banks were recipients of billions of dollars in bailout money. Goldman Sachs received \$45 million alone.

Such big-business money managers are now running the show at Harvard, and

have been using the endowment fund, which is supposed to be for educational services, as a huge slush fund. A revealing March 16 article in Forbes Magazine describes how Harvard was investing endowment money in exotic financial instruments that began to backfire on them. Wall Street giants like J.P. Morgan and Goldman Sachs were demanding more collateral.

According to Forbes: “Desperate for cash, Harvard Management went to outside money managers begging for a return of money it had expected to keep parked away for a long time. It tried to sell off illiquid stakes in private equity partnerships but couldn’t get a decent price. It unloaded two-thirds of a \$2.9 billion stock portfolio into a falling market. And now, in the last phase of the cash-raising panic, the university is borrowing money, much like a homeowner who takes out a second mortgage in order to pay off credit card bills.”

The Forbes article talks about Jack Meyer, who headed the university endowment fund under President Lawrence Summers until 2005. “Meyer built a Wall Street-like trading operation and managed most of HMC’s money in-house. It looked like a giant hedge fund, and it had paychecks to match. A high-level HMC

manager would make as much as \$35 million in good years.”

The result has been a 30 percent drop in the endowment, with a loss of \$11 billion and about \$550 million in income. Shortly after Faust’s announcement of this over the winter, a hiring freeze was implemented at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, the largest division at Harvard, as well as a salary freeze for faculty and other “exempt” staff.

Layoffs or threats of layoffs began among the maintenance workers and workers at the libraries and in the dining halls. This was seen by many workers and student activists as the Corporation taking their losses off on the backs of the workers. Harvard began crying poor at meetings, in emails and in articles in an effort to convince the Harvard workers and students that cuts and layoffs were necessary, when in reality they were needed to preserve profits and cut losses. There is still \$25.9 billion in the endowment fund!

The workers—immigrants, women, single mothers, people of color who clean the offices and laboratories; who cook the food that feeds the students; who type, file and answer phones—have been joined by class-conscious students in declaring together: No layoffs, no cutbacks! Education is a right! No, we will not pay for your crisis! Harvard has the money! This is an educational institution, not a financial empire!

When the Corporation recently told UNITE/HERE that there would be layoffs and an elimination of hot breakfasts for students, 350 angry workers turned out that night at shift change and marched through Harvard Yard and into Harvard Square ready to fight back.

The battle has just begun. This coalition of workers, students and the community needs to be strengthened and broadened in order to kick out the banks that are feeding like greedy pigs at a trough.

Eckfeldt is a member of the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers. Childs is a UNITE/HERE chief shop steward, representing dining hall workers at Harvard.

Who are the ‘automakers’?

By Martha Grevatt

Not so long ago General Motors, Ford and Chrysler were known as the Big Three automakers. Now that they’re not so big, they’re called the Detroit Three, but they’re still called automakers. Hyundai, Nissan, Tata, Fiat, Opel, Volkswagen, etc., are all called automakers.

Why? When is the last time any CEO or executive actually made an automobile? In fact Michael Moore documented the inability of industry executives to even perform an oil change.

So who are the automakers? I thought—laid-off autoworkers have lots of time to think—of all the cars on the road, millions of cars, some stopped in traffic, others zipping along what Woody Guthrie called “that ribbon of highway.” So many ribbons of highway. So many vehicles rolling off the assembly lines, year after year. General Motors and Ford are over a century old.

Who makes the cars? It’s not Fritz Henderson, Alan Mulally or Aiko Toyoda—all auto executives. It’s certainly not Bob Nardelli, who will soon be joining Rick Wagoner in that golden unemployment line for displaced CEOs.

Every vehicle on the road has been touched by hundreds of workers’ hands around the world, part of a complex web of supply chain networks that cross borders and oceans to get to the assembly plant.

shelf and pulled out a tattered copy of “Wage-Labor and Capital.” This pamphlet is based on a series of lectures given by a young Karl Marx in 1847. At 29 Marx had not fully developed his theories on political economy. For the 1891 edition, published eight years after his dear friend’s death, Friedrich Engels altered the text.

“According to the original,” wrote Engels, “the worker sells his labor to the capitalist for wages; according to the present text he sells his labor power. It is not a case here of mere juggling of words, but rather one of the most important points in the whole of political economy.

“We live today under the domination of capitalist production, in which a large, ever-increasing class of the population can live only if it works for the owners of the means of production—the tools, machines, raw materials and means of subsistence—in return for wages. On the basis of this mode of production, the cost of production of the worker consists of that quantity of the means of subsistence—or their price in money—which, on the average, is necessary to make him capable of working, and to replace him, after his departure by reason of old age, sickness, or death, with a new worker—that is to say, to propagate the working class in the necessary numbers.”

In Marx and Engels’ time we were more likely to be paid by the day or by piece rate than by the hour, but the inherent ten-

dency of capitalists is still the same. It is never to pay the workers for their labor—a “fair share” of the wealth they produce. It is to drive the price of labor power—wages—down to just what is essential to keep a worker alive and reproduce future generations of workers. This is true for me and my union sisters and brothers in Twinsburg, Ohio, where Chrysler is trying to close our plant. And it’s true for my sisters and brothers in Toluca, Mexico, to whom Chrysler barely pays what they need to survive and raise families.

“In our present-day capitalist society labor power is a commodity,” Engels went on to explain, “yet quite a peculiar commodity. It has, namely the peculiar property of being a value-creating power, a source of more value than it itself possesses.

“It is the working class alone which produces all values.”

That’s right. Workers get the raw materials out of the ground. By our hands they become the hundreds of parts that meet each other at assembly plants all over the world. By our hands they roll off the line and travel to a shrinking number of dealerships.

We are not just another group of “stakeholders” or “unsecured creditors,” to be lumped together with stockholders, bondholders or bankers.

We are THE automakers.

We have the right to fight for union jobs and union wages. To this end, on June 14-17, all roads lead to Detroit for the People’s Summit and Tent City. □

Thousands march for health care in Seattle

Fighting the insurance companies and their moves to buy off Congress and the Obama administration, 5,000 to 10,000 people marched in a Seattle rally demanding health care for all. With mothers at the front of the march, the May 30 event was themed “Mothers Leading the Way.” People came from all over Washington State, with 190 participating organizations in-

cluding unions and health care, women’s, immigrant and church organizations.

Chants and signs signaled a predominance of the demand for single-payer health care. While speaking, U.S. Senator Patty Murray—who has never supported single-payer health care—was shouted down with chants of “single-payer!”

—Jim McMahan

Coalition sets back resegregation plan

Continued from page 3

committee not be apologists for Boston’s richest businesses and banks like Bank of America and Fidelity—starving public education while demanding trillion-dollar bailouts from the taxpayers. This money belongs in our schools and communities!”

School Superintendent Carol R. Johnson announced that based on the community feedback on June 3, the committee would not vote on the “5 zone” plan at its upcoming June 24 meeting but would rework it over the summer and present a revised plan in the fall and January 2010. Heartened by the night’s victory, speakers lined up for the next two hours to say that they will continue to mobilize parents and students in every school until the racist plan is finally withdrawn and defeated.

The CEQE includes the Black Educators Alliance of Massachusetts; Work for Quality-Fight for Equity; Steelworkers Local 8751; City Councilors Chuck Turner, Charles Yancey and Sam Yoon; the Powerful Students of CASH (Community Academy of Science and Health); the Bail Out the People Movement; the youth group Fight Imperialism, Stand Together; and other teachers, parents, students and activists.

Read the entire article at www.workers.org.

On The Picketline

By Sue Davis

CWA locals go after AT&T

Over 110,000 AT&T employees, represented by the Communication Workers union, are exposing the world’s seventh largest corporation all over the country because it won’t agree to an equitable contract. On May 27 CWA members clogged the entrance to the Four Seasons Hotel in Carlsbad, Calif., chanting, “You can run, but you can’t hide” while AT&T CEO Randall Stephenson attended a high-tech conference there. Those trying to enter the hotel were confronted by a gigantic, inflated “Randall the Rat&t.” On May 28 public rallies were held in Oakland, Calif., and Arlington, Va. CWA locals held a rally in Kansas City on May 29, while members handed out flyers about the contract stalemate during AT&T night at the Kansas City Royals’ baseball game. (CWA e-mail)

Mich. State nontenured faculty vote union

The 650 full- and part-time faculty who are given semester-by-semester contracts at Michigan State University voted at the end of May to be represented by the American Federation of Teachers. Job security, health insurance and wages top the demands of the newly formed Union of Nontenure-Track Faculty. Part-time teachers at Western Michigan University joined AFT Michigan in February.

Immokalee Workers win in Fla. tomato fields

Two of the largest organic growers in Florida signed agreements to implement the principles of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers’ “penny-per-pound program,” reported the June 5 AFL-CIO blog. That means the workers, mostly Spanish-speaking immigrants and African Americans, will get 72 to 77 cents for every 32-pound bucket of tomatoes they pick, up from 40 to 45 cents. Since CIW started this campaign in 2005, it has won support from such chains as Taco Bell, MacDonalds, Burger King and Subway. While upscale Whole Foods Market, which buys from the two growers, was the first supermarket chain to support the campaign, WW notes that WFM workers are still unrepresented.

Workers win card check victory in Calif.

Local 5 of the Food and Commercial Workers union just won card check recognition at Berkeley Bowl, an independent supermarket in California. Though management has been fighting unionization since 2003, the bosses finally decided, under public pressure for the Employee Free Choice Act, it was “the right thing to do.” Just shows that persistence and good timing do pay off! □

Take back WBAI!

Continued from page 2

Meanwhile Pacifica Corp.’s interim executive director, Grace Aaron, has imposed a gag rule threatening any programmer who discusses these matters on the air. Join the Coalition to Take Back WBAI on June 17 in a demonstration at the station from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. WBAI is located at 120 Wall St.; take trains 2/3/4/5 to Wall St. For more information call 212-561-7231 or visit www.takebackwbai.org, www.justiceunity.org and www.wbixradio.org. □

Bill of rights shows

Why domestic workers have a right to organize

By Imani Henry
New York

It has been five years since the Domestic Workers’ Bill of Rights was first introduced in the New York state legislature. Finally, after over 70 years of being excluded from labor laws, the 200,000 nannies, housekeepers and elder caregivers are gearing up for the final weeks before passage during this legislative session. The campaign for the Domestic Workers’ Bill of Rights has been led by the group Domestic Workers United, founded in 2000 and currently organizing women workers, largely immigrants from the Caribbean, Africa and Latin America. According to its website, “Domestic workers care for the most important elements of New Yorkers’ lives: their families and homes. Without the labor of domestic workers, many employers could not participate in the workforce, from Wall Street to hospitals.” (domesticworkersunited.org) The bill of rights campaign has been highly successful in bringing to light the super-exploitation of domestic workers. “The working class has been in crisis long before the economists said anything,” Joyce Gill-Campbell, a DWU organizer and activist, told Workers World. “Instead of bailing out the auto companies or the big banks, they should be bailing out the auto worker, the farm worker or domestic worker. We, the workers, should be the ones on those committees deciding where the bailout money should go.” She continued, “Out of a workforce of 200,000 domestic workers, 18 percent live below the poverty line. Only 13 percent of workers earn a livable wage despite the fact that 50 percent of the workers in our industry are the primary income earners for their households.”

To fight global capitalist crisis

People’s Summit discusses issues, action plan

By Betsey Piette
New York

Under a canopied “tent city” in the Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza across from the United Nations, more than 200 individuals and 35 organizations gathered for the People’s Economic Summit on May 31. The gathering was called by the Bail Out the People Movement to discuss the theme “Another World is Urgently Needed ... But We Must Fight for It!” The conference had been scheduled to take place just before a June 1-3 U.N. Conference on the Economic Crisis, a forum for the concerns of the 192 member nations of the General Assembly. However, pressure from the powerful economic countries forced postponement of the U.N. conference. The postponement gave added significance to the People’s Economic Summit. The event became a protest against the G20 governments, particularly the U.S. and European imperialist powers, which conspired for months to weaken and derail the U.N. economic summit. Jamaican Ambassador Byron Blake, senior advisor to U.N. General Assembly

Data gathered by DWU show that domestic workers work upwards of 10 to 16 hours per day, with the vast majority receiving no overtime pay, health insurance or regular vacations. Domestic workers often work for the same employer for several years but are generally fired without notice, severance pay or recourse. Many workers have reported being cheated by their employers who owe them back wages and refuse to pay, or they have been forced to use their own money to pay for food or items for the household without reimbursement.

Legalized slave labor

“When you hear all the stories, I don’t think slavery was really abolished in the U.S.; it has just been camouflaged,” says Gill-Campbell, who is from the Caribbean. “Over one-half of the industry works 50 to 60 hours a week, but 40 percent of workers can’t pay their phone bill; 37 percent can’t pay their rent; and one in five domestic workers reports not having enough food to eat.” Stemming from the days of slavery in the U.S., it was historically African Americans who were domestics as well as field workers. Now the current “house” and “field” slave system is majority immigrants of color, many of whom are undocumented and face super-exploitation. The National Labor Relations Act that supposedly guarantees U.S. employees the right to organize specifically excludes both domestic and farm workers from having the right to organize. The Fair Labor Standards Act, which sets the federal minimum wage rate, maximum hours and overtime standards, excluded domestic workers until 1974. Currently this act still excludes coverage for “casual” employees such as babysitters and “companions” for the sick or elderly,

while live-in domestic workers cannot get overtime under the FLSA. The Occupational Safety and Health Act explicitly excludes domestic workers and until recently farm workers from fair legal standards and protections. Even the 1964 Civil Rights Act that prohibits discrimination based on “race, color, religion, sex, or national origin” does not include domestic workers and farm workers because employers with only a few employees are exempted from this law. Furthermore domestic workers experience rampant verbal, physical and sexual abuse and harassment within the industry. The Domestic Workers’ Bill of Rights includes the right to overtime pay, vacation and sick leave, 21 days’ notice of termination as well as the ability to take employers to court to fight for back wages. From June 4 to 15, DWU has called a series of events and actions in New York City and Albany to shine a spotlight on the pending bill of rights. They plan to hold a 24-hour vigil at New York City Hall June 12 and have called for a New York Children and Families March for Domestic Workers Rights for June 14. From June 15 to 17, a historic regional conference is planned for the National Domestic Workers Alliance. Formed in 2007, NDWA is made up of 16 domestic workers groups nationally. It is estimated that there are over two million domestic workers in the U.S. “We are optimistic that we are going to get the bill passed. We have churches, unions, students, employers aligned with us for this final push in our fight to demand respect, recognition and dignity,” says Gill-Campbell. To participate and/or support the final weeks of the fight for the Domestic Workers’ Bill of Rights, go to domesticworkers-united.org. □

bility for creating it,” Blake noted. “Stimulus packages are being introduced in developing countries, with nothing for the rest who will be forced to take on additional debt. As in the U.S., most of the global resources are going to those responsible for causing the crisis and little goes to those who were innocent victims. “If we agree it’s a global crisis then all nations have to be involved,” Blake said.

‘It’s all based on greed’

Ramsey Clark, winner of the 2008 Human Rights Award of the United Nations, received resounding applause when he said: “The global economic system we have does not work. We have to throw out the entire system. It’s broke and you can’t fix it! “I’ve spent my entire life dealing with state violence—cops on the beat, armies

Continued on page 8



May 31 plenary session.
WW PHOTO: LEILANI DOWELL

Unite NOW to fight for jobs

By Gavrielle Gemma

Fourteen and a half million workers, or 9.4 percent of the workforce, are now officially unemployed, with only half receiving any unemployment benefits. These numbers translate into 60 million lives affected when you consider families and others dependent upon the unemployed. If you add in discouraged or involuntary part-time workers, the rate is 16.4 percent, or 25 million workers, according to writer Frank Bass. (AP, June 5) Yet the big-business media are proclaiming the recovery is growing.

Fred Goldstein wrote in a recent Workers World article entitled “Stocks Up, Economy Down” that this is a capitalist era of deliberately shrinking the economy while speaking of a recovery. Goldstein states, “A new discussion [among the capitalists] is taking place on the so-called ‘natural’ rate of unemployment based on the permanent destruction of jobs.” (workers.org, May 10) Goldstein exposes that the capitalist class is happy with unemployment permanently at 10 percent or higher. In fact stocks rise upon the news of plant closings. Profits are all that matter.

Of course there is nothing natural about any of it, and any rate of unemployment is unacceptable and unnecessary. Goldstein

goes on to say, “even in the event of a stabilization of the economy or some sort of capitalist recovery, the crisis for the working class will remain.” These are fighting words. Only the struggle of the workers, employed and unemployed, will bring any change.

Just how bad is it?

There are about 1 million unemployed in the New York City area. There are more people unemployed than employed in Detroit itself. Youth, seniors and the Black community, in general, are hit the hardest—never even regaining jobs during the last “recovery.” There are millions more who can’t get enough hours of work. Need a raise? Fat chance. The bosses love high unemployment because the competition between workers is high and pay goes down. Real wages have dropped while prices for many basic commodities have risen.

It’s not just in the major metropolises. In Oregon there are 81,000 people officially unemployed, and they all registered for the same 700 jobs at minimum wage. This past May 15 Oregon Governor Ted Gulongoski introduced a bill for 12,000 jobs lasting four to six months working at food banks and restoring wetlands and parks. He invoked the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s: “We need to take the same kind of immediate action in Oregon. ... We have a jobs emergency.” (The Oregonian, May 15)

National Public Radio reported that the Port St. Lucie County government in Florida is considering declaring itself a disaster area to make money available for jobs. “The impact [of the housing bust] far exceeded the cumulative impact of three hurricanes that hit us in 13 months. ... So I believe the economy has risen to the level of a man-made disaster,” stated St. Lucie County Commissioner Doug Coward. (May 24)

So some states or local areas are attempting to take some action. But as a whole, the capitalist government is promoting the trickle-down lie of “bail out the banks” and this will help workers. There are no federal proposals for creating real jobs, just more baloney about job training for jobs that aren’t there. No federal law has been proposed making it a crime to shut down a perfectly good factory.

According to the International Labour Organization and World Bank, bailouts to banks are five times larger than any “fiscal stimulus to the real economy.” (ilocarib.

org, March 24) The U.S bailout is “\$8 trillion in capital infusions, low interest loans and federal guarantees.” (fiscalpolicy.org, December 2008)

This doesn’t include, of course, the trillions that routinely go to military war profiteers and debt payments to banks. Not only is the money there, but it came from the labor of the international working class in the first place.

Unite & organize or compete & lose; what makes more sense?

A. Philip Randolph, a great union and civil rights leader, met Franklin D. Roosevelt and told him he had the

power to take action against racism. Roosevelt told Randolph, “Make me do it.” And it is said that Roosevelt told CIO head John L. Lewis, “Make me,” when Lewis demanded jobs for the unemployed. During a 2008 presidential campaign speech in New Jersey, Barack Obama repeated that story. Was he sending us a message?

The crisis created by capitalism is worldwide. According to a February 2007 Department of Economic and Social Affairs report, an estimated 1.6 billion people—currently about one-third of the world’s workforce—are unemployed or underemployed. (un.org)

Workers are scouring the globe to find ways to feed their families. We can com-

pete against each other, blame each other falsely, and reap a crop of endless falling wages and unemployment. But your job is not safe if you don’t fight for the unemployed. Or we can reject the bankers’ arguments and unite in a great struggle for jobs.

Danger of inaction on unemployment

If a progressive, class-consciousness movement of workers and activists does not try to intervene to fight for real jobs, then the right wing will take advantage of unemployment. Whether liberal, militarist or fascist, all are different forms of capitalist government committed to maximizing profits before people. The right wing will whip up racism against Black workers and immigrants and blame women, lesbian, gay, bi and trans people, China, Eastern European workers, Martians and whoever else takes the heat off the bosses—the big capitalist banks and industries who create unemployment and underemployment.

The need for jobs is a huge challenge. Everything is falling apart. It’s time to organize!

Are you unemployed or underemployed and want to join a movement to fight for jobs? Workers World newspaper wants to hear from you. Send e-mails to letters@workers.org. □

COMMENTARY

BUILD THE STRUGGLE FOR SOCIALISM WITH WORKERS WORLD FUND DRIVE

Founded in 1959, Workers World has consistently struggled on behalf of workers and the oppressed who are exploited by capitalism and imperialism. Can you help meet the \$60,000 fund drive goal by donating \$19.59 today to celebrate of the 50th anniversary of Workers World Party and newspaper?



Yes! I wish to celebrate Workers World
☐ I can contribute \$19.59
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To contribute with a credit card use our secure Web site at www.workers.org

“Patriarchal prejudice serves capitalism in two ways: it keeps the whole working class divided, and it holds down wages for women and for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender workers. *Low-Wage Capitalism* shows the necessity and the great potential for solidarity among all the low-wage workers of the world.”

– Martha Grevatt, founding board member (1994) and national executive officer (1996-2001), *Pride At Work*, AFL-CIO, Executive Board member UAW Local 122

Low-Wage Capitalism

A timely new book by Fred Goldstein describes in sweeping detail the drastic effect on the working class of new technology and the restructuring of global capitalism in the post-Soviet era. It uses Karl Marx’s law of wages and other findings to show that these developments are not only continuing to drive down wages but are creating the material basis for future social upheaval, the end of working-class compromise and retreat and must end up in a profound revival of the struggle against capital.

Available at www.Leftbooks.com

Keep auto plants open!

Continued from page 1

sentative bodies from the communities. There is much talk about creating a green economy and improving mass transportation. The country desperately needs mass transportation and environmentally friendly technology. The auto bosses, the oil companies and the industrialists have been fighting against it for years.

The workers can stop the Big Three from destroying perfectly good factories that could be used to create high-speed and other railroad cars, buses and subways. Under workers’ control a vast changeover of the industry could take place. Engineers, designers and planners familiar with the transportation and auto industry could be hired by the unions. Reconstruction plans could be forged in collaboration with state and local governments throughout the country.

Such an arrangement would also put an

end to the scapegoating of Mexican, Chinese and other workers outside the U.S. who need jobs just as much as U.S. workers do. After all, it is GM, Chrysler and Ford that are squeezing workers and laying them off, not workers abroad. With government funding, no jobs would have to be sacrificed.

Organize from below

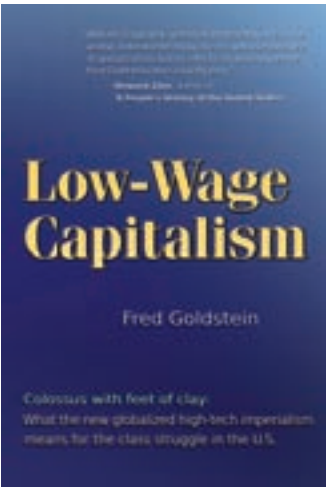
The question is how to get there. A first step is for the rank-and-file to get organized from down below to overturn these latest contracts. Even though workers voted to approve them, they are not legally binding because they were signed under duress.

No court of law is obliged to recognize any agreement, written or verbal, made under duress. What else can it be called when unions and workers are put under pressure by the companies, the Treasury Department, the White House and the banks to sign their futures away or face liquidation of the company, with the loss of all their jobs? When unemployment is going through the roof, it is a choice between slow death or sudden death.

The whole process turns collective bargaining into a farce. It is a violation of the National Labor Relations Act to force workers to bargain with a gun to their head. The only “bargaining” was over how much blood the companies were going to take. The companies have no right to make such extortionate demands and the union leaders had no right to participate in this farce and give legal cover for a corporate attack on the very union and workers they are supposed to represent.

This latest surrender has been sold on the basis that profit is inviolable and workers’ rights can be chucked out the window; that the workers’ fate has to be tied to “market conditions”; that the right to shut down and lay off workers comes before the right of workers to a job.

The argument goes that GM and Chrysler must be “lean” in order to be “compet-





Mohawks defend sovereignty at Akwesasne

By Mahtowin

The Mohawks of Akwesasne are defending the sovereignty of their territory by protesting a Canadian government plan to arm border guards at Akwesasne with guns as of June 1. On June 8 Mohawks at Tyendinaga in eastern Ontario blockaded the Skyway Bridge to show their solidarity with Akwesasne.

Canadian border agents walked off the job on June 1, and the Canadian Borders Services Agency preemptively shut down the Cornwall Island border crossing after the Akwesasne Mohawk leadership said it would not allow armed border guards on their territory.

Canadian Public Safety Minister Peter Van Loan, who has refused to consult with the Mohawks, has said the border crossing would not reopen until the Mohawks accepted armed guards at the post. The Canadian government plans to have all Canadian customs officers carry guns by 2016, and implementation of this program has already begun.

Although initially Mohawk residents of Akwesasne were prevented from crossing the bridge to get from one side to the other of their own reserve, the crossing was reopened to Mohawks in June. The Mohawks are maintaining a 24-hour encampment at the border crossing. Some news reports state that the Canadian government is considering relocating the border crossing outside of Mohawk territory.

The Mohawk territory of Akwesasne straddles the jurisdictions of Ontario, Quebec and New York state, and is an international border crossing between Canada and the United States. Out of 119

land-border crossings managed by the CBSA, it is the only crossing located in the middle of a First Nations territory.

Mohawk land was illegally expropriated for this purpose. For decades, the Mohawks have resented and protested being forced to cross through U.S. and Canadian customs in order to travel within their own territory, and they have endured a long history of harassment by border guards.

The Canada Customs port of entry is located in Kawehnoke, a residential district of the Akwesasne Mohawk Territory, and is the location of a school bus stop, recreational fields, a large number of homes, a district convenience store, several small businesses and other typical features of a populated residential area. The Mohawks have protested for months due to their concern that the community would be endangered if CBSA agents were to carry firearms.

Akwesasne Mohawks account for nearly 70 percent of traffic that passes through the border facility. This includes Kawehnoke residents who use the border crossing several times each day on their way to work or school; to carry on daily business; to visit friends and family; or to attend the health, social, cultural or recreational facilities and events throughout this territory bisected by the international border.

As one Akwesasne Mohawk, Larry King, told the Ottawa Citizen shortly before the June 1 deadline, “The CBSA is a foreign, oppressive force who occupies our sovereign community and territory. [They are] unwelcome, uninvited and now carrying firearms. For lack of a dif-

ferent description, that is considered by some an act of war.” (May 29)

Canada gov’t denies Indigenous sovereignty

Numerous other Native struggles and blockades are currently taking place across Canada against a backdrop of a Conservative Canadian federal government led by Stephen Harper. Some First Nations people had hoped for a better relationship with Canada because of Harper’s much-publicized apology last year for the crimes committed against thousands of Indigenous people by the government during the residential school era. At that time tens of thousands of Native children were snatched from their homes, put in residential schools, and all too often beaten, molested and even killed.

Harper’s government, however, has increasingly signaled that it will not recognize the sovereignty of Native nations. Harper and his cronies are moving to what they call a more “market-oriented” approach in relation to First Nations. Ottawa has now stated that it will withhold additional funds to Native nations that are not considered by Ottawa to be sufficiently cooperative.

Chuck Strahl, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, recently contrasted the benefits of cooperation and partnership with the situation at Akwesasne. Strahl said the government of Canada does not recognize the Mohawks’ sovereignty claim and the rule of law applies to everyone: “Mohawk communities have a particular perspective about pre-Confederation and so on. I hope that nothing I’m saying is disrespectful but

my observation is ... if you don’t develop healthy working relations and partnerships with other levels of government and your neighbors, you will suffer because you lack opportunities.” (National Post, June 3)

First Nations across Canada have a common source of frustration: They are not consulted on laws or policies that impact them directly.

The Canadian government, like the U.S. government, has refused to support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This declaration provides minimum standards for the survival of the world’s Indigenous peoples.

Canada is also preparing to host the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, British Columbia. Some First Nations and lesbian, gay, bi, trans and queer activists, residents who have been forced out of Vancouver’s Eastside, and others are opposing the Olympics and have threatened to disrupt the games. The border guards are expected to be part of a heavy security effort during the Olympics.

To show support for the Mohawks of Akwesasne, contact Canadian officials:

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Office of the Prime Minister, 80 Wellington St., Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2 Canada; fax 613-941-6900; e-mail pm@pm.gc.ca.

Public Safety Minister Peter Van Loan, Parliament Hill Office; phone 613-996-7752; fax 613-992-8351; e-mail vanloan.p@parl.gc.ca.

Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Chuck Strahl, 10 Wellington St., Gatineau, Quebec K1A 0H4 Canada; phone 819-997-0002; fax 819-953-4941.□

To fight global capitalist crisis

People’s Summit discusses issues, action plan

Continued from page 5

invading someplace—but economic destruction is more deadly. How many starve to death? How many have illness, sicknesses? We’ve been exploiting our neighbors—the cause of colonial wars and also world wars where the big guys fight to see who will get the spoils. It’s all based on greed, but the greatest problem is the increasing concentration of wealth.”

Bernadette Ellorin, secretary-general of BAYAN, an alliance of progressive Filipino groups in the U.S., said: “Stimulus money is committed to the titans of finance. The G20 have pledged more money to the International Monetary Fund to build up this long discredited organization, but made no provisions for debt cancellation to benefit the people suffering from the debt crisis.”

Fred Goldstein, Marxist writer and author of “Low-Wage Capitalism,” explained: “The crisis circling the globe is not just an economic crisis, but a capitalist crisis, artificially created on the backs of workers worldwide by a system that knows only one thing: profit.

“Autoworkers all over the Midwest and South are being told, ‘Shut down 14 GM and eight Chrysler plants,’ ‘Shut down hundreds of dealerships,’ ‘Take wage and benefit cuts.’ Why? Because GM is in a crisis of profitability, and workers have to bear the burden of GM’s failure by giving up homes, benefits and jobs.

“The property rights of capital must come second, the rights of workers first! This was the message when workers at Republic Windows and Doors took over

their plant in Chicago. Workers’ rights must come before the rights of the bosses,” Goldstein said.

The voice of First Voices Indigenous Radio Lakota Nation, Tiokasin Ghosthorse, spoke on the growing impact of the global crisis on the environment and on Indigenous peoples whose nations and languages are disappearing at an alarming rate.

Other speakers on the panel included co-chairs Berta Joubert-Ceci and Sara Flounders of the International Action Center, and Chris Silvera from Teamsters Local 808 and the Million Worker March. Silvera said: “All of the government forces are powerless when we rise up. History has shown us this time and time again.”

A second panel chaired by Larry Holmes of the Bail Out the People Movement and anti-war activist Alison Bodine addressed the fight-back strategies needed to counter the crisis.

“If there had been big marches of working and poor people in New York City against unemployment, foreclosures, utility cutoffs, it would have created a better environment for the U.N. summit,” Holmes said. “Imagine if there had been a general strike, sit-ins, or plant occupations.

“We should be in their faces demanding jobs. This country has to be about creating 10 million union paying jobs—a WPA [Works Progress Administration] program. Globally, 100 million jobs are needed.

“In four months we need to mobilize for the G-20 summit in Pittsburgh to demand money for jobs and human needs,

not wars and greed,” Holmes concluded. “Also keep in mind October 3, which marks the one-year anniversary of when Congress passed TARP.”

Kali Akuno of the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and International League of Peoples’ Struggle described the ongoing struggle of New Orleans residents displaced since Hurricane Katrina in 2005. “Almost four years later, hundreds of thousands are still displaced. There is a standing order to remove 4,300 families from trailers in the Gulf Coast.

“The struggle in the Gulf Coast is a first wave, just the beginning of what everyone else is now experiencing. Capitalism is getting leaner and meaner. We have to step up to the plate and be broader and stronger.”

Monica Moorehead of Millions for Mumia and editor of “Marxism, Reparations and the Black Freedom Struggle” discussed the importance of exploring the relationship among political repression, racism, prisons and the capitalist economic crisis.

“Just as the U.S. military around the world or the Israeli army in Palestine serve to repress struggle, racism, daily harassment and police brutality serve as occupying forces in communities of color at home,” Moorehead said. “We need to elevate the issue of repression, cops and prisons at the G-20 summit. We need to raise the plight of Muslim prisoners targeted under the guise of the so-called fight against terrorism; the MOVE 9, jailed for opposing the poisoning of people and the environment; Mumia Abu-Jamal, Leonard Peltier and many more.”

Other speakers included LeiLani Dowell, who discussed the upcoming Detroit People’s Summit and Tent City; long-time cultural activist, Vinie Burrows; Dulphing Ogan, secretary-general of KALUMARAN, Alliance of Indigenous Peoples in Mindanao; Brenda Stokely from the Million Worker March, who spoke on the need to build a broader movement for social justice; Curtis Doebbler, Nord-Sud XXI NGO based in Geneva, a human-rights lawyer who spoke on the Palestinian people’s struggle against Israeli occupation; and the Rev. Lucius Walker of IFCO Pastors for Peace.

Panels discuss specific struggles

Earlier in the day five breakout sessions involved conference participants in wide-ranging discussions. The sessions included a panel on “Workers’ Struggles in the U.S.” Participants discussed the fight for jobs, the Employee Free Choice Act, foreclosures and evictions, the fight for single-payer health care, and efforts to make unions more accountable to the rank and file.

At a breakout group on “Racism, Political Repression and the Prisons,” participants addressed how the lack of jobs has resulted in the U.S. having the largest prison population in the world with majority Black, Latino/a and Native prisoners, and growing repression against youth, immigrant workers, and Arab and Muslim people. Workshop participants included activist attorney Lynne Stewart and members of the New York Free Mumia Abu-Jamal Coalition, Millions for Mumia, New York Committee to Free the

Sotomayor & Puerto Rico’s colonial status

By Berta Joubert-Ceci

President Barak Obama’s recent nomination of Federal Appeals Judge Sonia Sotomayor to the Supreme Court has stirred much controversy. The U.S. far right has whipped up venomous racist diatribes against her.

If confirmed by the Senate, Sotomayor would be the first Latina justice and the third woman to sit on the 220-year-old court. And Sotomayor is not simply Latina in general, but she is Puerto Rican.

We people of Puerto Rico are Latinos/as but also mostly Afro-Caribbean and Indigenous—even though our original Indigenous population was exterminated during the Spanish colonization. But that also holds true for Dominicans and Cubans.

Puerto Rico, an occupied territory by USA

What makes Puerto Rico different is that our country is still the only formal colony of the United States in this hemisphere, subject to U.S. rule in all our spheres of life. U.S. rule is what has marked the political life of the Boricua people—the Taíno Indigenous name of the island is Boriquén—since 1898, both on the island and in the U.S.

According to international law, that our country is a colony is itself a crime. That law recognizes the right of the subjugated peoples to end colonial rule by any means that they have available. The United Nations’ De-colonization Committee has for many years approved resolutions on behalf of the right for independence and self-determination of Puerto Rico.

We consider Sotomayor, though born in the South Bronx, a product of that colony just as those born on the island are.

Does it sound then like a contradiction or a case of ultimate irony that she might hold a post on the highest legal court of the colonizer?

Every Puerto Rican person I know is glad that Sotomayor has won this bourgeois democratic right. She has an impressive professional background and, most of all, has never renounced her identification as a Puerto Rican in order to be accepted by her peers on the bench or other professionals.

Probably her refusal to deny her heritage and her unwavering defense of affirmative action are the main reasons she is under attack from the right wing.

Of all the articles about Sotomayor, I have seen none in the corporate media dealing with Puerto Rico’s colonial status. Should a Puerto Rican be accepted on the Supreme Court, Puerto Rico’s colonial status may become an issue central to many discussions.

U.S. crimes hurt Puerto Rico

The ProLibertad website explains what the U.S. did to Puerto Rico: “The U.S. military declared martial law, installed a U.S. governor, and began a program to alter and destroy the fiber of Puerto Rico. Over the years, the U.S. destroyed Puerto Rico’s agrarian economy; devalued its money; imposed citizenship on its people to facilitate drafting its men into the U.S. army to fight the U.S.’s wars; imposed the teaching of the English language and U.S. history on its students; polluted its air, land, and water; sterilized its women; and installed 21 U.S. military bases on some of the best land.” (www.prolibertadweb.com)

But there has been resistance to U.S. rule, both armed and unarmed, since the very beginning. Washington and its island stooges have always attacked this resistance with repression. This article will mention just one of many examples, the cruelest in recent history.

On Sept. 23, 2005, on the most important for independence activists—The Day of Grito de Lares, commemorating the 1868 uprising against Spanish colonialism—the crime occurred. While thousands of pro-independence Puerto Ricans were gathering in Lares for the annual event, the FBI landed on the island and killed Filiberto Ojeda Rios, leader of the anti-imperialist Machetero (Popular Boricua) Army in his house in nearby Hormigueros.

A sharpshooter atop a nearby roof shot Ojeda Rios in the neck. Though the wound would not have been fatal had he received immediate medical aid, the FBI prevented medical help from arriving and let him bleed to death for hours.

Independence activists and sympathizers have been and still are under surveillance, harassed and their homes invaded. Many have been imprisoned for long terms, called to grand jury hearings, some such as Filiberto Ojeda Rios have been executed, and the imperialists have used many more infamous repressive tactics.

The struggle continues

Because of its colonial status, Puerto Rico’s economy is just an appendix of the imperialist economy. This is now the most crucial aspect in Puerto Rican politics. The U.S.-centered economic and fi-

nancial crisis has had enormous negative impact on the island’s economy.

That impact, together with the new pro-statehood administration of neoliberal Gov. Luis Fortuño, acts as a death blow to the union movement and all workers’ rights. Fortuño is trying to impose several laws that according to him will stabilize Puerto Rico’s economy. These laws, however, will cause massive layoffs. They will also privatize what was not privatized during the previous pro-statehood administration of Pedro Roselló.

These changes are causing an unprecedented response from the masses. A movement initially called by some of the most militant unions in the island, “All Puerto Rico for Puerto Rico,” has coalesced forces from all sectors of society. Labor, religious, left political organizations and parties, students and youth, environmental, cultural and other sectors have joined to protest these neo-liberal policies and demand reparations from the government.

On June 5, some 100,000 people gathered in San Juan in a “Peoples Assembly.” Before the Capitol, they read a declaration with the demands from Puerto Rico’s people and vowed to continue organizing in each of the 78 municipalities in the nation. The front banner read: “Puerto Rico is on its feet; Puerto Rico is in the streets.”

As are all the peoples of the world when they unite and struggle, the people of Puerto Rico are an indomitable force. This action on June 5 has demonstrated the resilience and the capabilities of the people united. They did it when they drove the U.S. Navy out of Vieques; they can do it again. ¡Viva Puerto Rico libre! □

Obama’s speech in Cairo

By Joyce Chediac

On June 4 U.S. President Barack Hussein Obama gave a much-heralded speech addressed to the Muslim world in Cairo, Egypt. The commentary below is based on a comment Chediac, a Lebanese-American, made at a June 5 Workers World Forum in New York City.

Obama made a speech. It was called “bold” and “tough on Israel” because it called for no new Israeli settlements in the West Bank. But Israel does not have to start new settlements to continue the strangulation of the West Bank. It merely has to expand the huge high-rise settlements ringing East Jerusalem, which have virtually sealed off the West Bank. And many of these are not even considered settlements anymore, so their expansion is not even monitored.

Obama made a speech. It was hailed as “evenhanded” because for the first time a U.S. president mentioned the word “Palestine,” and said Palestinians have a right to a state. But he called on Palestinians defending their right to a state, and on Hamas by name, to “renounce violence” while never calling on Israelis to renounce violence and the more than 60 years of state terrorism Israel has perpetrated against the Palestinian people, made possible with U.S. aid and U.S. weapons.

Obama made a speech, which will surely lead to another round of peace talks. Since talks began in 2000, they have been used by Israel not to bring peace, but as a cover for unprecedented violence against the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza. In the name of peace Israel has been building the apartheid wall, riddled the West Bank with checkpoints, demolished homes and stolen land, tortured and arrested youth so that the West

Bank is now one big jail. Meanwhile, Gaza is under siege.

The time for such talks is long past. Action is needed to give the Palestinians some relief. But Obama did not take action. He did not demand disassembling the apartheid wall on the West Bank. He did not demand lifting the siege of Gaza, where 10 percent of Gaza’s children are now growth-stunted from the long-term effects of malnutrition. Instead, Obama made a speech.

Obama made a speech that was much heralded in the U.S. media, but U.S. troops are still in Iraq and Afghanistan, and U.S. drone planes are still bombing Pakistani villages.

Obama made a speech, but the Sixth Fleet is still in the Mediterranean Sea; U.S. bases are still in Egypt, Israel, the Gulf States and the Indian Ocean. U.S. bases in Europe are still within striking distance of the Middle East.

Obama made a speech but the U.S. Navy still has a huge nuclear-armed armada in the Persian Gulf, with guns aimed at Iran. It is well known that the U.S. military threatens the Middle East in order to keep Middle Eastern oil in Wall Street’s hands. Yet Obama’s speech, which was called “insightful,” never once mentioned “oil.”

Obama made a speech in Cairo, the largest city in Africa. In order for Obama to make his speech there, the largest security force in the history of Egypt was assembled. The people of Cairo were confined to their homes and told to keep their windows shuttered. In order for Obama to make his speech, a city of 7.5 million was put on lockdown.

Obama said, “No government should be imposed by one nation on another,” and praised democracy. Yet Obama point-

edly criticized Hamas, voted into office in a Palestinian election which Jimmy Carter and other observers called one the best examples of participatory democracy in the world. But Obama had no words of criticism for U.S. ally Hosni Mubarak, Egypt’s head of state, who severely represses all political opposition, and is about to run in an election where he will once again be virtually unopposed.

Obama spoke in Egypt, the second largest recipient of U.S. aid. But Obama did not address the plight of the Egyptian people who, despite this influx of aid, have been steadily impoverished since their government came into the U.S. orbit.

Today, 70 percent of the Egyptian diet is bread. Over a million people live in Cairo’s cemeteries because there is no housing. Two years ago, one in five Egyptians couldn’t meet their basic living needs (Reuters, Oct. 17). Conditions now are surely worse as millions of Egyptians who worked abroad and sent money to families at home have lost their jobs due to the worldwide economic crisis begun on Wall Street. Obama certainly did not say that Egypt’s relationship with the U.S. has brought its people only poverty and desperation.

Obama made a speech. But nothing changed.

The fundamental relationship between the U.S. government and the Muslim and other people of that region remains one of exploiter and exploited. Despite Obama’s speech, U.S. imperialism still has nothing to offer working people in the Middle East, and only seeks to take more from them. It is truer today than ever that any gains made by Muslim and other oppressed peoples are won by their own independent struggles, and the solidarity they win from progressives abroad. □



Cuba, Korea and U.S. bellicosity

When it became clear that the countries of the Organization of American States—all but one—would vote on June 3 to readmit Cuba to membership, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, representing the one, walked out.

Cuba has applauded the efforts of member countries to finally reverse its expulsion from the OAS, which Washington had engineered in 1962 after the failure of its invasion of Cuba. But Havana has said “no thanks” to reentering the OAS, which for half a century has done Washington’s bidding.

The reason Clinton gave for walking out was that the OAS is an organization of “democratic” states, and Cuba isn’t democratic.

This argument isn’t worth a wooden nickel in Latin America these days. It is common knowledge that Washington has been trying to undermine the democratically elected governments of Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador. The reason is clear: they are fighting in the people’s interests against transnational corporations based mainly in the U.S.

There’s also much history to blow Clinton’s “democracy” argument out of the water. Here’s just one example: In 1973, a right-wing military coup in Chile led by Gen. Augusto Pinochet overthrew the progressive government of President Salvador Allende and began a reign of terror. Thousands of leftists were rounded up and killed outright; others were tortured and “disappeared.” Eventually, a broad spectrum of political forces decried the fascist methods of Pinochet and his dictatorship.

However, the OAS never suspended Chile.

In fact, in June 1976 then U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger made a special trip to Santiago, Chile, for a meeting of the OAS General Assembly. In a confidential meeting with Pinochet on June 8, Kissinger reassured the Chilean dictator that, while the U.S. representative had to publicly say a few words about “human rights” in his talk to the OAS, Pinochet should not be worried.

“The speech is not aimed at Chile,” Kissinger told Pinochet. “My statement and our position are designed to allow us to say to the Congress that we are talking to the Chilean government and therefore Congress need not act.” If a bill pending in Congress critical of Pinochet was defeated, he promised, Chile would get a delivery of F-5E fighter planes.

Just to make sure Pinochet really got it, Kissinger emphasized, “We welcomed the overthrow of the Communist-inclined

government here. ... We are not out to weaken your position.”

An internal State Department memo describing this conversation was finally declassified in 1998. Kissinger, of course, has still not been prosecuted for his many crimes.

Just one day after Washington’s defeat at the OAS, the Justice Department announced the arrest of a former State Department employee and his wife on charges of having spied for Cuba—not for money, but because they were inspired by the changes there.

In his June 8 column in the Cuban newspaper Granma, Fidel Castro pointed to the “strange” timing of the arrests, given that the two are now retired, in their 70s, and, if the allegations against them are true, could have been arrested long ago. He added that “Perhaps the arrest was influenced not only by the tremendous setback suffered at San Pedro Sula [site of the OAS meeting—WW], but also by the news that there have been some contacts between the governments of the United States and Cuba on important issues of common interest.”

Many people hoped that Washington would soften its relentless blockade of Cuba once the Cold War ended. It didn’t. Then the election of Barack Obama as president and the return of the Democratic Party to control of the government encouraged new speculation that U.S. policy would change. However, if anything is driving the administration to explore changes in relations with Cuba, it is the overwhelming support that the socialist island has earned from the people of the world, especially in Latin America, Africa and the Caribbean. Washington is totally isolated in its open hostility to Cuba.

The eye of Clinton is trained on the other side of the world, too. The secretary of state, appearing on ABC’s “This Week” on Sunday, June 7, made new threats against the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, another country that has taken the socialist path. She said the administration was seeking a way to “interdict” ships and planes of the DPRK suspected of carrying weapons or nuclear technology.

To put it plainly, the U.S. is looking to commit an act of war against Korea. It’s a war move to stop or commandeer another country’s shipping.

Clinton also said the administration was looking for a way to reverse a decision made by George W. Bush last year to take the DPRK off its “sponsor of terrorism” list. More bellicose than Bush? Apparently so. But then, the Democratic Party has presided over most of U.S. imperialism’s wars over the last 70 years. □

IRVING FIERSTEIN

a peoples’ artist

By Sue Davis

For the better part of the last 75 years, revolutionary peoples’ artist Irving Fierstein used his immense talent to depict the many struggles of working and oppressed people for social and economic justice and against imperialism. In the early 1980s Fierstein created a unique genre of art—striking full-color revolutionary banners thoughtfully composed and painstakingly painted by hand. Hundreds of Fierstein’s banners provided visual focal points in countless marches and rallies in New York and elsewhere for more than two decades.

Fierstein painted his first banner in 1980 when Alexander Haig attempted to seize control of the government. A picture of the banner depicting Haig atop a menacing tank yelling, “I’m in charge,” was carried in dozens of newspapers across the country. Since then, Fierstein painted banners against Reagan cutbacks, affirming lesbian, gay, bi and transgender rights, Jersey City housing struggles, protests against police violence, and any number of U.S. invasions.

Perhaps the most famous image he created was for a 1987 New Years greeting card of two Black fists breaking chains imposed over a map of Africa with the slogan “Free South Africa.” Not only was the design also used on banners, buttons and placards, but the image was adopted all over the world to symbolize the struggle against apartheid. Monica Moorehead, a founder of the U.S. Out of Southern Africa Network, commented, “Irving’s powerful Free South Africa image truly captured the spirit of this heroic national liberation struggle. The image became an important part of mass culture as well, as it appeared in the movies ‘School Daze’ and ‘Cry Freedom’ and also on the front cover of Esquire.”

Not only did Fierstein’s art appear on leaflets and other printed materials, it illustrated articles in Workers World. But Fierstein’s activism didn’t end there. The artist was often the first one on a picket line or at a meeting. Always enthusiastic and optimistic, Fierstein was as generous with his resources as with his talent. He made significant monthly donations to the Workers World Supporter Program for over 30 years.

In 2001 Sara Flounders, an International Action Center co-coordinator in



PHOTO: BOB FIERSTEIN
Irving Fierstein in 2008.

New York, organized an exhibit to show the range of his art work. “It was a spectacular exhibit,” Flounders told Workers World. “The walls of the large IAC Center on 14th Street were covered with paintings expressing rage at the bankers and CEOs, pain for the millions starving during the Iraq Sanctions, the power of the Black Liberation struggle, and the chaos of capitalist plunder interspersed with banners of past demonstrations.

“Working with Irving on planning what to display and how to fit it in the IAC brought back years of struggle and street confrontations.” His daughter Laurie Fierstein, an organizer of Youth Against War & Fascism, Women United for Action and Workers World, said that the show “meant a lot to him.”

Anti-Zionist Jewish fighter

Born of Polish and Rumanian Jewish immigrant parents in 1915, Fierstein discovered his talent and love of art while a youth in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. He studied art and architecture at the Hebrew Technical Institute, but, unable to find work in his field, he turned to commercial art at Cooper Union. He also studied fine art at the Art Students’ League and the National Academy of Design, where he won an award in 1937.

Like many youth during the Great Depression, Fierstein joined the progressive movement. In 1935 he attempted to organize a Commercial Artists and Designers Union and helped to paint a giant Times Square billboard in support of Spanish Civil War anti-fascist freedom fighters in 1938. During that time he became active in the Communist Party.

In 1948 Fierstein took a principled stand when U.S. and British imperialism, working with the Zionist movement, occupied Palestine to set up the Israeli settler state. He was vocal in defense of the Palestinian people’s right to their homeland, which was highly unusual for someone raised Jewish. Even though that meant opposing the international socialist movement, which at the time nearly unanimously supported the Israeli state, Fierstein never wavered in his support for the rights of Palestinian people.

Fierstein resumed his art studies in the 1960s when he learned of the beating of civil rights activist Fanny Lou Hamer in a Mississippi jail. His oil of that shameful event painted in 1969 now hangs in the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Social Change in Atlanta. Over the years his oils, acrylics, lithographs, etching and mixed media were exhibited at several fine art New York galleries. This father of four continued to paint into his 90s.

A dedicated chess player, jazz aficionado and vegetarian cook, Fierstein was an accomplished athlete. At age 74 he won gold medals in racewalk races and finished first in his age category in the New York City Marathon. In his 80s Fierstein battled cancer with the same vengeance he pursued politics. He died from respiratory failure on May 25 at age 94.

Fierstein’s contributions to the many struggles he portrayed are legendary. They will be remembered by his many friends, comrades and family on July 19 in New York’s Solidarity Center. Irving Fierstein, presente! □

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Welcome to Maurice Bishop International Airport

By Stephen Millies

Grenada’s international airport was re-named after Maurice Bishop on May 29. It would have been the late revolutionary leader’s 65th birthday.

Thousands of Grenadians rallied the next day at the airport to celebrate. Bishop’s 94-year-old mother, Alimenta Bishop, was there. So were his partner, Angela, and their children, Nadia and Johnny. Many people wore T-shirts with Bishop’s face and the slogan “A dream come true.” (Grenada Herald, May 31)

Grenada lived through a nightmare when the U.S. invaded on Oct. 25, 1983. President Reagan sent 7,000 troops and two aircraft carriers to attack a country with only 110,000 people. U.S. planes bombed the Richmond Hill Psychiatric Hospital, killing 47 patients. The Pentagon claimed “armed patients and staff” were ready “to resist our forces.” (WW, Nov. 10, 1983)

For a country dependent on tourism, having an airport that can handle jet aircraft is a necessity. Grenada Prime Minister Maurice Bishop sought and received Cuban assistance to build the airport.

ICC escalates pressure on Sudan

By **Abayomi Azikiwe**
Editor, Pan-African News Wire

International Criminal Court prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo has called for the immediate arrest of Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Hague-based court indicted Al-Bashir in March in connection with the government’s efforts to halt rebel attacks in the western Darfur region of the central African state.

“The government of Sudan has the responsibility to arrest him [al-Bashir],” Moreno-Ocampo told the United Nations Security Council on June 5, citing legal obligations mandated by the U.N. Charter and resolutions.

In addition, the ICC prosecutor told the Security Council that the Sudanese government “has also the duty to arrest” Sudanese ex-minister Ahmad Haroun and Civil Defense Forces leader Ali Kushayb who were also cited by Moreno-Ocampo for alleged war crimes in the Darfur region of the country.

Moreno-Ocampo then accused the Sudanese government of violating U.N. resolutions by appointing Haroun as governor of South Kordofan province. “We are at a crossroads. There’s a chance to stop the violence. Crimes have to be stopped,” the ICC prosecutor said.

In the aftermath of these statements by Moreno-Ocampo, the Sudanese Ambassador to the United Nations, Abdel-Haleem Abdel-Mahmood, confronted the ICC prosecutor outside the Security Council chambers, resulting in a near-clash between the two men. Abdel-Mahmood accused the Moreno-Ocampo of being a “liar” and said his actions are promoting the destruction of Sudan.

The “official called on the United Nations Security Council to put an end to Ocampo’s mandate saying that his government appointed a special prosecutor to look into crimes taking place in Darfur. He also described Ocampo as ‘the man on his left’ as a ‘fugitive from Sudanese justice’ and said that the ICC prosecutor is practicing ‘criminal tourism’ with his backers around the world.” (Sudan Tribune, June 5)

The U.N. Security Council was not expected to take any action or issue a statement in response to the ICC report. Russia and China, two permanent members of the Security Council, have in the past blocked actions against Sudan.

Abdel-Mahmood reiterated the position of the Sudanese government: “We are not going to cooperate with this politically motivated court [the ICC].” He went on to say: “The prosecutor has outlived his usefulness and has become a liability

for his own promoters.” (AFP, June 5)

Sudan rejects isolation

Despite these charges against the Sudanese leader, the government has remained defiant and is refusing to cooperate with the ICC. President Al-Bashir traveled to Zimbabwe on June 6 in order to participate in a Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa regional conference. He was welcomed by Zimbabwe Vice-President Joice Mujuru and President Robert Mugabe.

The Zimbabwe Minister of Justice Patrick Chinamasa said that the Sudanese leader was welcome to visit the country. “We are aware that the President of Sudan is under an ICC warrant of arrest which he disputes. We are not a state party under the Rome Statue. We have no obligation under the Statue of Rome to execute that obligation,” he said. (Sudan Tribune, June 6)

President Al-Bashir has traveled to other countries since the indictments were issued against him in March. He has visited Qatar, Egypt, Eritrea and Ethiopia and has been welcomed by the governments of these states.

On June 8 an African Union meeting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, convened with representatives of 30 countries who are signatories to the Rome Statue that established the International Criminal Court. African nations constitute the largest regional group that has recognized the ICC, yet they are charging that the court unfairly targets African leaders. All the indictments issued by the ICC have been against former African leaders and officials, rebel commanders and, of course, the sitting head-of-state in Sudan.

Although a number of organizations inside the United States and the government itself have accused Sudan of genocide in Darfur, the ICC indictments speak only of war crimes and crimes against humanity. In a recent statement by President Barack Obama in Germany criticizing Sudan and charging the government there with genocide, the U.S. leader said that his administration is still very much engaged in seeking a resolution to the conflict in Darfur.

However, the Sudanese foreign ministry spokesperson Ali Al-Sadiq responded to Obama, saying that the statements made by the U.S. president were “out of context” and politically motivated. Al-Sadiq pointed out that the newly appointed U.S. Special Envoy to Sudan, Scott Gration, did not accuse the African state of genocide during a recent visit to the country.

“Al-Sadiq said that even the judges at the International Criminal Court dropped

the genocide charges against Sudanese president Omar Hassan al-Bashir last March. The Sudanese diplomat’s statements mark a rare criticism of the new U.S. administration. Washington appeared to soften its tone toward Khartoum and even suggested that normalizing bilateral relations and lifting sanctions imposed since 1997 are on the table.” (Sudan Tribune, June 7)

Supporters of the Darfur rebel movements in Sudan have been critical of President Obama’s efforts in recent months. They are saying that he is backing away from promises made during the 2008 campaign for Washington to take an even tougher line toward the Sudanese government on the Darfur question.

The ICC and the struggle against imperialism

Sudan is one of Africa’s major oil-producing countries, and has therefore been targeted for destabilization and domination by the Western imperialist states led by the U.S. The country has maintained an independent domestic and foreign policy over the last two decades and has refused to cooperate with the U.S. on a number of its initiatives related to the Iraq war and relations with Iran and Palestine.

Earlier this year the Israeli Air Force bombed a convoy of vehicles in Sudan, claiming that the government was involved in arms shipments from the Islamic Republic of Iran to Palestinians in Gaza. The Darfur support movement in the United States is largely composed of pro-Israeli organizations that have continued to make unsubstantiated claims of genocide against the Al-Bashir government.

In a recent article by Zafar Bangash entitled “The ICC: An Instrument of Imperialism,” the author states: “Church groups, Zionists and a number of Western governments are interfering in Sudan. Since all people in Darfur are Muslim, the anti-Muslim card cannot be used as was so effectively done in Southern Sudan. Here, an ethnic twist is utilized: the Darfurians are presented as ‘Africans’ while the central government in Khartoum is run by ‘Arabs.’

“Why Arabs cannot be Africans is not explained but the propagandists can count on the ignorance of their own people, especially in North America. Africa is a continent and being African is not an ethnic label: if white South Africans are considered Africans because they reside in an African country, on what logic are northern ‘Arab’ Sudanese excluded from being African?”

When the Rome Statute was established in 2002, only 66 of the world’s 192 countries ratified it. That is only

one-third of the recognized states in the United Nations. At present the number of signatories to the Rome Statute have reached a total of 108 states.

Even three permanent members of the Security Council, the U.S., Russia and China, have not ratified the Rome Statute and are therefore not bound by the ICC. Nevertheless, the ICC is being utilized by the imperialist states to undermine the sovereignty of Sudan.

The fact that only Africans have been indicted by the ICC calls its legitimacy into serious question. Bangash points out in his article: “The non-ratifiers clearly have no faith in it for a variety of reasons ranging from reluctance to relinquish sovereignty to seeing it as the white man’s justice.

“Since the overwhelming majority of countries in the world fall in the category of ‘non-white’ and are situated in the South—as opposed to the European and North American North—this division clearly comes into play.”

Moreover, the genocidal policies carried out historically by the Western imperialist states have never been addressed by any of the existing international bodies. The founding of the European colonies in the Western Hemisphere resulted in the mass extermination of the Indigenous peoples of the Caribbean, Latin America and North America.

In addition, the Atlantic slave trade that went on for over three centuries transported tens of millions of Africans from the continent to the Western Hemisphere for the sole purpose of labor exploitation. Millions of Africans died in the process, and even today there has never been any effort to pay reparations or make amends for this historical injustice.

Over the last two decades from 1991 to 2003, over 1.5 million Iraqis have died as a result of the Gulf War and sanctions. The invasion and occupation of Iraq led by the U.S. and Britain from 2003 to 2009 has brought about the deaths of another 1.3 million people, and the displacement of 4 million others.

There is well-documented evidence of torture and other crimes against humanity leveled by the U.S. against people in Iraq, Guantanamo Bay, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Somalia. Yet the ICC or other Western-based and -controlled institutions have taken no action against these horrendous crimes.

Consequently, targeting Sudan by the imperialist states must be opposed by anti-war and social justice advocates in the Western countries. This double-standard must be exposed and the real perpetrators of racism, national oppression and genocide should be brought to justice for their crimes against humanity. □

Continued from page 10
Barnacle, June 3)

Cuban Vice President Estaban Lazo Hernandez spoke about Maurice Bishop and his friendship with Fidel Castro. Other honored guests included Dominica Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit and St. Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Dr. Ralph Gonsalves. (Juventud Rebelde, June 1)

“Grenada and Maurice have come home symbolically and in reality. ... This belated honor to an outstanding Caribbean son will bring closure to a chapter of denial in Grenada’s history,” said Dr. Gonsalves. (Grenada Herald, May 31) Gonsalves had been Bishop’s friend. He led protesters at the University of the West Indies when revolutionary historian Walter Rodney was kicked out of Jamaica in 1968.

Revolutionary gains under Bishop

The “chapter of denial” Prime Minister Gonsalves referred to is the Grenadian Revolution. Maurice Bishop led members of Grenada’s New Jewel Movement in overthrowing Eric Gairy’s dictatorship on March 13, 1979.

People rejoiced. Among the victims of Gairy’s cruel regime was Maurice Bishop’s father, Rupert Bishop, who had been murdered. Gairy was a crackpot who lectured the U.N. General Assembly about UFOs.

The revolution went to work. Three out of four families received interest-free loans and low-cost building materials to fix their homes. Schools were repaired. Free books, school uniforms and hot lunches were provided for the first time for the poor. Health care was made free and the number of doctors and dentists doubled. Within four

years the island’s unemployment rate fell from 50 percent to 12 percent.

Cuban aid and Cuban volunteers were indispensable. Aid was also given by the Soviet Union, socialist countries in Eastern Europe, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, Libya and Syria. Grenada was also becoming a socialist pole of attraction for African Americans.

Grenada’s revolution meant the most to Grenada’s women. “The very first decree of the revolution was to outlaw sexual victimization and exploitation of our women in return for jobs,” said Maurice Bishop during his speech to thousands at Hunter College in New York City on June 5, 1983. Jacqueline Creft became minister of education.

Four months later Bishop was shot by his own comrades. U.S. imperialism’s escalating hostility—punctuated by genuine

threats of invasion—turned Grenada into a political pressure cooker. The New Jewel Movement split.

Killed along with Maurice Bishop on Oct. 19, 1983, were Fitzroy Bain, Norris Bain, Jacqueline Creft, Vincent Noel and Unison Whiteman. Reagan exploited this tragic event to launch his racist invasion.

Twenty-six years later Grenada repudiated Reagan by renaming its airport after Maurice Bishop.

Thousands of Grenadians live in New York City. The New York Times refused to print anything about this politically important act of defiance. Neither did the Washington Post.

Corporate media censorship couldn’t prevent flight attendants from announcing, “Welcome to Maurice Bishop International Airport.” □

Policía ejecuta desahucio ilegal

Dueño de propiedad muere resistiendo desalojo

Por Kris Hamel
Detroit, Michigan

Mark D. Fussner murió el 22 de mayo después de una balacera con la policía después de varios intentos por las autoridades de desalojar al propietario de 44 años de edad. Dos agentes de la corte del Distrito 24 habían ido a la casa de Fussner en la calle Anne del barrio de clase trabajadora Allen Park en las afueras de Detroit para ejecutar el desalojo.

Se reportó que Fussner les ordenó a los agentes que se alejaran de su propiedad diciendo que abriría fuego contra ellos en defensa de su hogar. Los oficiales se fueron pero regresaron acompañados de oficiales armados de la policía decididos a ejecutar la orden de desalojo. Esta provocación por los agentes de la corte creó la violenta situación.

Fussner era el autor del libro publicado en 2004 “El zen de la pérdida permanente de peso”, que narraba su lucha y su método para vencer la obesidad. Una corta biografía del autor en Amazon.com indica que: “Educado en escuelas públicas, Mark diseñó su primer invento a los 16 años de edad. En 1989 recibió un Grado Asociado en Ciencias del Colegio Comunitario Henry Ford. Se superó trabajando en los más elementales oficios hasta hacer su carrera en ingeniería del diseño y de proyecto. ... Él ha sido propietario y copropietario de varios negocios”.

Después de cinco horas de confrontación, Fussner fue encontrado muerto por un disparo en el sótano de su casa. Aún no está claro si murió por un dispa-

aro de la policía o fue suicidio. Él se había encerrado dentro de su casa disparando contra la policía que había venido de al menos cinco ciudades, incluyendo a los “equipos especiales de respuesta” de Detroit y la policía del estado de Michigan. Temprano durante la balacera, un oficial de la policía recibió varios disparos en el brazo, estómago y en una pierna y fue dado de alta del hospital ese mismo día.

Vecinos y la policía han reportado que se dispararon durante el incidente desde varias decenas hasta centenares de tiros entre Fussner y la policía. Se le dijo a la gente que permaneciera en sus hogares, y las escuelas en el área cerraron para impedir que salieran los/as estudiantes.

La policía estatal ha tomado cargo de la investigación y el Médico Forense del Condado de Wayne llevará a cabo la autopsia de Fussner.

La moratoria debe ser cumplida

Lo que no se dice en los limitados reportes de la prensa capitalista local es que la muerte de Fussner y toda la situación de desalojo no debieron haber sucedido por ley.

El 20 de mayo, dos días antes de la visita con la orden de desalojo, el Presidente Barack Obama había firmado la ley pública #111-22, el Acta del 2009 para Ayudar a las Familias a Salvar sus Hogares. Al implantar la moratoria sobre ejecuciones hipotecarias, la ley mejora las provisiones del Programa para Hacer las Viviendas Asequibles (siglas en inglés, MHAP) instituido el pasado mes de marzo.

El MHAP requiere que prestamistas como Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac y otros de gran categoría—los cuales conjuntamente tienen el 75 por ciento de las hipotecas en Estados Unidos y los cuales han sido rescatados con cientos de miles de millones de dólares públicos—elaboren modificaciones a los préstamos para evitar las ejecuciones hipotecarias. Se supone que estas instituciones prestamistas deben rebajar los pagos mensuales de aquellos/as propietarios/as que están en riesgo de perder sus hogares—incluyendo los impuestos de propiedad y las mensualidades de los seguros—a no más del 31 por ciento del ingreso de la persona.

Algunos de los 14 bancos y prestamistas que están en el programa son el Bank of America, Chase Home Finance, CitiMortgage, Ocwen y la Wells Fargo. Las directrices del MHAP se aplican a cualquier propiedad que esté ocupada por su dueño/a, incluyendo las casas que ya están en proceso de ejecución hipotecaria. (financialstability.gov)

La Sección 401 del Acta del 2009 para Ayudar a las Familias a Salvar sus Hogares establece que es “la opinión del Congreso” que debe haber “una moratoria de las ejecuciones hipotecarias” y que las “instituciones que tienen las hipotecas y las agencias de servicios hipotecarios no deben iniciar ningún proceso de ejecución hipotecaria o venta de las hipotecas de ningún propietario hasta que las provisiones de mitigación de las ejecuciones” del programa Esperanza para los Propietarios y el “Plan de Asequibilidad y Es-

tabilidad para los Propietarios” de Obama “hayan sido implementados y encontrados viables por la Secretaría del Desarrollo de Viviendas y Urbanización y la Secretaría del Tesoro”. (thomas.loc.gov)

¿Dónde estaban los titulares el 21 de mayo en la prensa capitalista sobre la firma del Acta para Ayudar a las Familias a Salvar sus Hogares y la moratoria sobre las ejecuciones hipotecarias? No hubo ninguno y se aparecieron fueron muy pocos.

Jerry Goldberg, un abogado de Detroit que representa a los/as propietarios/as e inquilinos/as en los casos de ejecuciones y desalojos, dijo a Workers World/Mundo Obrero: “Los récords en el Registro de Títulos muestran que la hipoteca de Fussner estaba en manos de Chase Bank, el cual tenía el deber bajo la ley federal, de concretar una solución que debía prevenir que los agentes de la corte fueran a desalojarlo de su casa el 20 de mayo.

“Este desalojo no debió haber sucedido. La muerte de Fussner no debió haber pasado. Todo era totalmente prevenible excepto que los bancos y los prestamistas no obedecen las leyes a menos que sean forzados”.

Tomó una lucha prolongada por activistas en todo el país para ganar la nueva moratoria federal de las ejecuciones hipotecarias. Y conllevarán más luchas aún para publicar esta ley y evitar más muertes y otras acciones drásticas por propietarios/as que enfrentan el proceso de perder sus hogares en cifras récords por ejecuciones y desalojos.

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Protestas detienen desalojo por Bank of America

Por Kris Hamel
Detroit, Michigan

Una militante manifestación el 29 de mayo frente al Bank of America en Detroit detuvo el desalojo programado para el 1 de junio de Michelle Hart y su anciana madre.

Countrywide Home Loans, el cual es propiedad del Bank of America, rehusó modificar la hipoteca ‘subprime’ (de alto riesgo) de tarifa ajustable como es requerido por ley federal. La manifestación y las llamadas telefónicas desde todas partes del país al presidente del Bank of America Kenneth Lewis en la oficina general del banco en Charlotte, Carolina del Norte, forzó al prestamista suspender el desalojo.

La abogada de Hart, Vanessa G. Fluker, dijo a Workers World/Mundo Obrero: “Ella trató desde enero del 2008, por casi año y medio, de obtener una modificación de su préstamo de Countrywide. Pero para cuando el prestamista revisó los documentos, dijeron que ya ‘era muy tarde’ para modificarlos porque la orden de venta ya se había dado. Pero en realidad una declaración jurada de remoción les hubiera permitido la modificación del préstamo”.

Como millones de dueños/as de casa, Hart se retrasó en los pagos hipotecarios cuando la tasa de interés se reajustó aumentándola, mientras ella perdía su empleo. Según Fluker, Hart logró obtener un empleo por medio de una agencia de empleos temporales, pero Countrywide le

dijo que el ingreso de ese tipo de empleos “no contaba” para una modificación del préstamo.

Tanto Countrywide como Bank of America están obligados por contrato federal a llevar a cabo modificaciones de préstamos. Pero aún así, rehúsan ayudar a muchos/as propietarios/as y por el contrario, siguen el proceso de ejecuciones hipotecarias y desalojos. Prefieren forzar a las familias a la calle en vez de elaborar términos que permitan al banco recibir los pagos y a los prestatarios salvar sus hogares.

“Ambas instituciones, Countrywide y Bank of America, han recibido rescates en miles de millones de dólares públicos”, dijo Fluker. “Encima de eso, el gobierno federal en realidad le paga a los bancos por hacer lo que estos están obligados a hacer

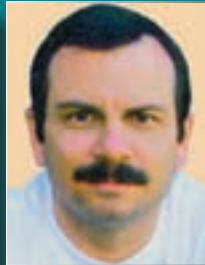
bajo leyes como el Programa para Hacer las Viviendas Asequibles: trabajar con los prestamistas y modificar las hipotecas para que la gente se pueda quedar con sus viviendas. Cualquier persona puede visitar el sitio web www.financialstability.gov/docs/agreements y leer los contratos. Verán que Countrywide recibe \$1.864.000.000 y Bank of America \$798.900.000 para modificar los préstamos”.

Countrywide le dijo a Fluker el 29 de mayo que el desalojo de Hart y su madre, quien sufre de cáncer en el páncreas, había sido “suspendido mientras se revisaba el caso”. Mientras tanto, no hay promesa alguna de que la modificación del préstamo de Hart se producirá y el desalojo todavía está pendiente.

La Coalición ¡Moratoria Ya! para Detener las Ejecuciones Hipotecarias y los Desalojos, que organizó la manifestación del 29 de mayo con menos de dos días de notificación, insta a las personas solidarias con Hart a que mantengan la presión sobre Countrywide y Bank of America. Llamen al Presidente del Bank of America, Kenneth Lewis al 704-386-5687 y exijan que modifique el préstamo de Michelle Hart.

Su casa está localizada en Sutherland núm. 27685, Southfield, Michigan; préstamo núm. 138009372 □

Libertad para los cinco compatriotas cubanos que defendieron a su país del terrorismo y que ahora están presos en EE.UU. por evitar muertes en la isla



Gerardo Hernández Nordelo, Ramón Labañino Salazar, Rene González Sehwerert, Antonio Guerrero Rodríguez y Fernando González Llort.